

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1) I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

“In the long perspective of four thousand years, the Western world has discovered or invented only two master plots, two narratives of high explanatory power . . . The sequence of Hebrew covenants followed by the New Testament Redemption story offers an account of things bestowed on us from on high by a single God . . . The new story of life emerging out of the primal slime and finding its upward way by natural elimination . . . has partially displaced the old story without destroying its teachings and ideals.” (Roger Shattuck, *Forbidden Knowledge*, 302)

Genesis One and Science

The Church doesn't need to have a quarrel with the scientific theory of evolution. The Church's quarrel is with scientists and others who deny God in the name of science. Science is not competent to disprove or to prove the existence of God. Those who say it is do a disservice to science, and they show their irrational hostility toward Christianity and toward all people of faith.

Here's an imaginary situation that makes my point. The Old Testament tells how Joshua and the armies of Israel marched around the city of Jericho seven times, blew their trumpets, and the walls came a-tumbling down. What I am about to describe I made up to make a point. It did not happen. Let's just suppose that archeologists unearthed a large stone in the ancient walls of Jericho. And let's suppose that on that stone they found writing that said clearly, “Joshua wuz here. We blew our horns, and the walls fell down.”

That would be an exciting discovery. It would confirm again that the Bible is rooted in history. But it would not prove the most important thing of all. It would not prove, it could not prove that God had anything to do with the collapse of Jericho. That would have been then as it is now: a matter of faith. Science could not disprove it, and science could not prove it.

Genesis one makes three points, which we accept by faith. God created the universe and everything in it; everything God made was good; and the universe is the setting for the drama between God and Man, who is the one part of creation that bears His image and likeness.

That is what we mean when we confess: “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” No discovery of genetics or particle physics gives the Church any reason to doubt those three statements. In fact, the more science demonstrates the workings of nature, the more nature declares the glory of the God who created them.

So, let's make our confession without flinching, and let us say to those who believe that science disproves Christianity, “I'm sorry. I respectfully disagree, and I believe you do a disservice to science when you say that.”

God As Delegator and Designer

Okay, let's suppose you agree so far. God is the maker of heaven and earth. The Bible expands that meaning in several directions. I'll focus on four expanded meanings.

Psalm 8:6: **You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet.** That is astounding. The Maker of heaven and earth has delegated His creation to Man. He has authorized us to understand and use nature to benefit Man. Scientists, mathematicians, engineers, doctors, and technicians rule creation

through science. They are the trustees of creation. That authority has not been rescinded, and it is not optional.

The wisdom of God also placed verse six in the context of verses 3-4: **When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?** We need the trustees of creation to go about their impressive work with greater humility. Here are two reasons why.

First, every advance in “the conquest of nature” brings evil as well as good to humanity. Advances bring relief from suffering and create wealth. They also raise disturbing questions about human wisdom and goodness. Science cannot save us from sin and suffering.

For example, the physics of Sir Isaac Newton and his successors led to the Industrial Revolution. Machines began to relieve the backbreaking manual labor Man had done for centuries, and it created wealth for ordinary people. It also gave rise to urban ghettos and the oppression of the working class and the rise of Communism. It has placed global stress on the environment. The fruit of science is bitter and sweet. That mixed blessing calls for humility.

Second, scientists exert such power over nature, because they bear the image of God. We sometimes refer to a bright person by saying, “He’s a brain,” or “She’s a braniac.” Their reason displays the image of God in them. But scientists don’t just think. They also act, and every act has a moral dimension. They also hunger for God and must seek Him until they find repose in Him. It is an insult to scientists to say that they have outgrown their need for God. If for no other reason, they need God, because their power over nature places human existence at great risk. People who sometimes act like God need the humility to say they need God.

So, God has delegated His creation to Man. God also designed His creation. That means He built purpose into what He made. Mark 10:6-9 reveals His purpose in a way that speaks pointedly to issues the trouble our country at present.

People had asked Jesus to justify divorce. His response must have caught them off guard. It can still stop you in your tracks. **‘But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’**

Jesus rooted His teaching in God’s original intention for what He created: **“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’”** It’s easy to say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” Jesus was saying, “If you believe that, then take seriously His original purpose for what He created.”

Jesus expressed that purpose in verse 6. **“God ‘made them male and female.’”** Jesus saw the physical designs of men of women as permanent indicators of God’s intentions. When Christians oppose same-sex marriage, we should say without a trace of animosity, “It violates the purpose of the Creator.”

Jesus expressed that purpose in verses 8-9: **And the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”** That’s why Christian marriage vows say, “Till death do us part.”

One more point about the Creator’s design. I suppose that God could have created human beings as full-grown adults, capable of reason and moral choice from day one. He did not do it. He chose instead for human beings to result from processes that take place

in the secret places of a woman's body. Women are the chosen carriers of humanity's future. That is your calling, and it merits sacrifices on your part and on the part of your husbands to fulfill that calling.

It also falls us to us who confess, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth" to speak on behalf of the unborn. We dare not "take refuge in slogans like: 'Who am I to be judgmental?'" and the famous, 'Personally, I'm opposed, but I can't impose my opinions on others.'" (Mary Ann Glendon, *First Things*, June/July, 2003)

That simple confession: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth" commits us to building marriages between a man and woman which endure and in which children are welcomed into life and protected in law. This line of the Apostles' Creed affects everything from international politics to welfare programs to the curriculum of your local school.

Futility and the Future

"That," you say, "is all well and good, but what do I say to my homosexual friend who says to me, "I don't want to be gay. I can't help it. I ask God everyday to help me like girls. I have prayed and tried for years to change, but I'm still gay. What am I supposed to do'?" You can see why some homosexuals say that God created them to be gay, and that's why they think it's okay.

What would you say to your friend? What I say next is not nearly enough, but it is enough to get started. Look at Romans 8:20-21. **The creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.**

We live in a broken world with broken dreams and broken hearts and a broken sexuality. The worst thing we can do is to pretend it isn't broken. Saying that homosexuality is just another lifestyle, equal in dignity and significance to heterosexual relations and to marriage as God created it to be is delusional, and there will be the devil to pay.

I know that leaves so much unsaid and so much to do about same-sex issues, divorce, and unborn children, but saying that much helps us to keep our moral bearings. Telling the truth about ourselves leaves open the hope that one day it **will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.**

We mar God's design in many ways. God has a Plan B. Revelation 21:1: **Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.** Verses 4-5: **"He will wipe every tear from their eyes There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."** **He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new."**

Hope fuels the human spirit. Those who deny God in the name of science say that death is the end of you. That kills hope. We're different. We believe that **Christ has indeed been raised from the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.** (1 Corinthians 15:20, 22) Then, at last, all will be well.

Coaching Tips

- A. Build your marriage. Be willing to live through periods of unhappiness. They don't have to last. We have at our disposal spiritual and therapeutic resources that can make your marriage stronger, more stable.
- B. Confess to God that your divorce is sin. Have you ever done that? There's no going back. You can't undo the past, and you can't undo its consequences. You may also still hate your ex. You should put that into your confession as well. Confession of this or any other sin to God is central to a right relationship with God and to your healing from that lacerating experience.

Some of you are divorced. But you feel safe coming to this church. Why? You know we teach that marriage is between one man and one woman for life. You know that God hates divorce. But you feel safe here. Why? I think I know. I hope I'm right. You feel safe, because you can trust the pastors of this church to tell the truth about our human failings and call us to repentance, and at the same time we don't condemn you.

We try to show that we mean it. When someone comes to me to talk about their deepest, darkest secrets, they can be embarrassed and apologetic. Early in the conversation I may say, "Hey, you came to see me today, because you need my help. Right?" "Right." "Well, tomorrow, I may need your help. So, let's just get over it and help each other. Okay?" "Okay."

That's how Christ in His eternal pity treats me. That's how I want to treat you.